



## **ASIA/VIETNAM - Emergency in the south: viral strain affects thousands of children and has already killed 16**

Hanoi (Agenzia Fides) - A dangerous strain of a disease that affects hands, feet and mouth (HFMD) has hit Vietnam and has affected more than 21 thousand people, mostly children under 5 years of age, already killing 16. According to the Ministry of Health, although it is a benign viral infection in industrialized countries, the EV71 strain of the HFMD continues to claim victims in Asia. In particular, in the southern part of Vietnam, the children are looked after in hygienically precarious kindergartens while parents work. The symptoms of this strain are fever, mouth sores and blisters on hands and feet. The disease is spread through contact with fluids of infected people, and yet there is no specific cure. Most viruses that cause HFMD are benign, but EV71 can be fatal. The new strain appeared in Vietnam last year and since then it has been a serious problem for children's health. The risk of infection is greatly reduced by improving sanitation, operation for which the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Vietnam (IFRC) is committed to the promotion of public education campaigns. In 2011 there were 110 000 reported infections and 169 deaths related to EV71, mainly in the south. The disease is active all year round, with peaks between April and May and then again in September and October. In March 2012, the deaths recorded were double and the infection seven times more than the same period the previous year. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 24/4/2012)